



**The Institute of Education**  
79-85 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2

# StudySkills

A complete course in how to study more effectively and achieve your potential in exams

with Orla Ní Shuilleabháin



## Introduction

Welcome to The Institute of Education Study Skills course. We'll look at everything from setting goals to proper exam techniques and get you in the best possible shape to tackle your exams at the end of the year.

This booklet will be your study skills bible for the year ahead. If you ever have doubts or are struggling to keep up the good work, look back through these notes and see if anything jumps out at you. From idea mapping to homework environment tips, there is something in here to help fix any problems you have getting down to study.

Try and take notes and make sure to fill in the examples as we work through them together. Remember, practice makes perfect!

Orla

# StudySkills

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## Session Two



# Study Blocks

For the majority of students it is not an easy task to sit down and study and one of the main reasons is that we are not properly taught how to do so. Also, for many students, the fear of failure weighs heavily on their minds. It is often easier for them to avoid beginning their study altogether, 'Out of sight, out of mind.' This lack of initiative will result in a build-up of assignments and incomplete memorisation which, come exam time, is often impossible to get through.

The good news is that approaching your learning in an organised and planned way will help you avoid these problems.

- **Read this study guide from cover to cover** and try to **apply the techniques and advice** that you learn to your own studies as best as you can.
- The best thing you can do to overcome this barrier to effective study is to **think positively** (setting some goals for example) and get going. Once you have begun an assignment, you may find that it is more interesting than you thought and perhaps not as challenging as you had anticipated.

- **The relief you feel as you accomplish a task will motivate you** and you will begin to look forward to this feeling of satisfaction as you progress further in your studies.

Not being able to study could also be categorised in two other ways, **Conscious and Sub-conscious reasons**. Put simply they are the reasons the student knows about as well as reasons that may not be as obvious.

## Conscious Study Blocks

- The first category contains distractions such as **TV, a hectic social scene or social networking sites such as Facebook**.
- The physical environment around the student may have a bearing.
- There may be practical reasons such as having to help at home or the undertaking of part-time work which impacts on the time available for study.
- The student will have to deal with these as best they can and while it may not be possible to have ideal conditions for study, you must make the best you can of them! **Remember you can keep making excuses for ever!**

## Sub-conscious Study Blocks

The second category is less obvious and so may be more difficult to deal with. Here are some of the typical reasons underlying your inability to motivate yourself and get going:

- **Feeling of hopelessness**  
What is the point! / lack of motivation/ purpose / self belief in yourself.
- **Feeling of helplessness**  
Lack of ability to change / no structure/ no goals or long term aims/ why bother, it's not going to work?
- **Feeling overwhelmed**  
With the mountain of work ahead, we begin to panic! It seems impossible to tackle! We keep putting it off as long as we can.
- **Lack of Self Belief**  
You feel powerless. You feel you can't achieve anything. You have low expectations of yourself.
- **Self Labelling**  
You label yourself as not being able to do it. You make yourself believe you're lazy and soon enough it becomes a reality.
- **Undervaluing Yourself**  
You fear failure, criticism and have a low self esteem. You don't believe in your true ability!

# Self-Motivation



**Let's start with a simple definition for the word motivation: The reason or desire within a person to achieve a particular goal or objective.**

In the context of this article on study skills, motivation is **the drive we have to achieve our academic targets or goals** and this will come from 2 main sources:

**Internal sources** such as the satisfaction or enjoyment that we all feel when we complete a particular task.

**External sources** which, in the context of our studies, could be the achievement of exam grades and the "goal" of getting our CAO choice.

The **key thing** about motivation is that it is something that we must **build from within ourselves** – although others can certainly help us achieve it.

As part of your overall assessment on the effectiveness of your study skills, you should decide on what things you are trying

to achieve and how you go about achieving these. **You must also have a strong self belief** in your own ability to achieve these goals.

It is vital to **believe in yourself**. If you don't, how can you expect to succeed? Even a small bit of self-belief can work wonders!

Believe in your ability to achieve what you want and bring a positive attitude to your learning.

Begin to make it happen; plan small, realistic goals. Always be visualising the end goal in mind; what do you want to achieve in your exams? Your achievements can be endless if you choose to let it happen.

So make it happen by using all the techniques here!

*Be proactive*

1. **Take on the responsibility.** You have the opportunities and the faculties to succeed. It's up to you, not anyone else.
2. **Only you can realise your full potential.**
3. Only you can bring a desire and a willingness to succeed in your studies.
4. **Leave the past behind you.** Start afresh. Don't be labelled by anyone, including yourself.
5. **Know what you want** and how you are going to get it.
6. Have a **plan of action**.
7. Try **replacing negative thoughts** with positive ones.
8. **Challenge** yourself. This is a good time to set goals.
9. **Praise yourself** when you achieve something.
10. **Seek help** when needed.
11. **See the positives in everything!** Always see yourself in a win-win situation.
12. **Review progress** and make the changes necessary - don't give up.
13. **And remember: there is no problem that cannot be solved.**

## So What Can We Do?

These are the things you have to change. Remember, it's really important to think positively.

1. Talk to someone you trust. A Parent, Teacher, Friend.
2. Start small and set yourself realistic goals. Achieve them!
3. Do things differently - change your study area or don't go online until all study is completed.
4. You might change how you do things at weekends such as not going out on Saturday night and getting up for study early on Sunday morning (When the house may be quieter).
5. Spend some time thinking of the things that impact you and set out a plan to overcome them. This will lead to success for you in the short, medium and hopefully the long term.



# Starting Off Setting Goals

The word “Goal” has a great relevance in all our lives! As we head into the climax of the All Ireland series we know the excitement that scoring a goal can bring and we also know that in many instances goals win games! The word Goal has a very positive meaning and it is fitting that it reflects the things that we want to excel at and achieve!

It goes without saying that **people who set goals achieve a lot more** than people who don't! Listen to any of the great sports stars talking of their greatest achievements. Their **ultimate goal** was probably attained through the **achievement of many smaller goals set along the way!**

**Goals give us direction and a clear focus**, something to aim for! They enable us to monitor our progress and if necessary, aim higher. They help us **get started** and to **reach our final destination**. When it comes to **your own**

**goals** there are some very simple rules that need to be followed. Understand the task ahead, know what is required, the benefits of achieving the goal but most importantly you must be committed to it! **Your goals must mean something to you – they must be for you!** So, let's look at the key parts of a goal setting exercise ...

**Most of us find it hard** to get started so by setting yourself some “learning goals” it enables you to set a target and to have something to achieve when you finish.

**A goal** is something you want to achieve. Setting goals enables you to focus on the task ahead, **empowering you to achieve it**, once you keep to the plan.

To be successful in your “goals” you need to be realistic. Your goal should be very specific in what you want to achieve. Specify **when** and **what** you will do. General goals like “I’m going to study a lot more” won’t work. They must be a more **precise**. So, “I will study a minimum of 3 hours a night” is a much more precise goal.

## SHORT TERM GOAL

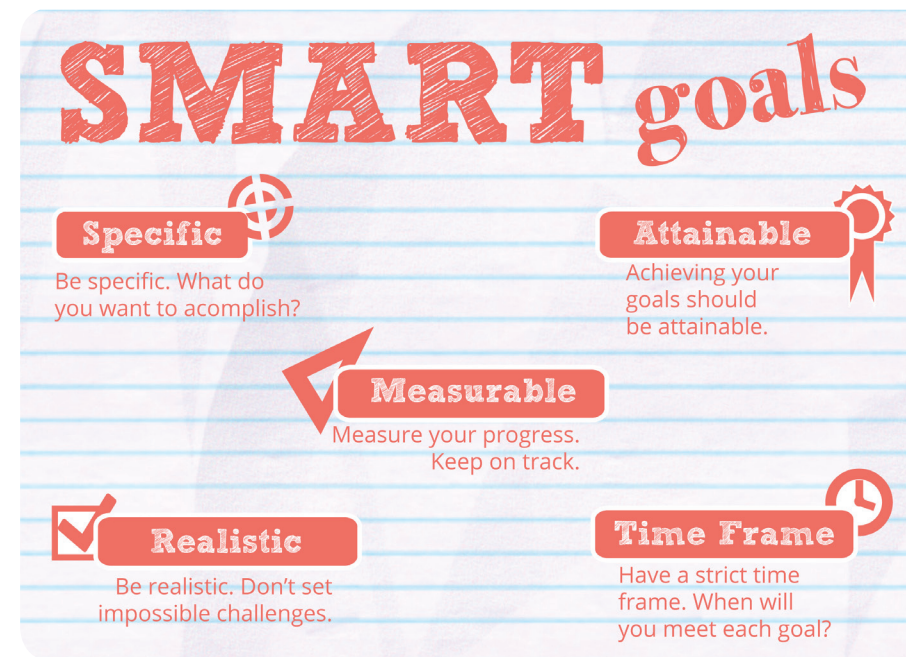
Something you want to achieve soon such as finishing your homework, doing well in a test next week or completing an essay by the end of the week.

## MEDIUM TERM GOAL

Something to achieve over the coming month/term such as completing part of a project or catching up on a subject that you have missed time on.

## LONG TERM GOAL

Something you want to achieve in the future such as specific results in a certain subject, minimum number of CAO points or your dream course in college.



There are many different acronyms for the **most effective goals** – one of the most commonly used is the **S.M.A.R.T model**. It gives us a very practical definition for 5 areas that make your goals work best for you.

**S – Specify:** Specify **your exact goal** and not something vague - i.e. study geography or maths. This is too vague. Provide enough detail as to what you want to do .i.e. Read p 56 – 65 in geography and revise chapter on algebra p 60 – 67 in maths. Note the main points.

**M – Measurable:** Your goal should be one in which you can **“measure” your progress** or end achievement .i.e. a summary/ study card/ measure how you achieve it.

**A – Achievable:** Your ‘goals’ should be **set by you rather than someone else**. You know your own strengths. You know what you can and need to achieve. Keep your goals challenging but within reach.

**R – Realistic:** Plan what you know you are capable of. **Start small**, with what you can do. Enjoy the satisfaction of achieving these. See the benefits. Then **increase the amount of goals- gradually!** Be realistic but ambitious.

**T – Time Frame:** Have a **time limit** on when you will complete this goal. Say when exactly you plan to work on this goal e.g. 5 – 6 pm on Wednesday after school. Bigger goals should be broken down into smaller, more manageable units.

**Keeping track of your goals is the key to attaining them!**

1. Review your goals regularly.
2. Measure / assess your progress.
3. Make changes if needed but be honest with yourself.
4. Set your goals on a weekly/ daily basis first; little but often.
5. Write your goals down in your designated study area.

Seeing them regularly will remind you of them and this in turn will improve your chances of completing them!

**Goals stop you from drifting and floating. They empower you to start achieving.**

Take this space to quickly practice what we have been studying. Specify three personal goals here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Setting Goals

1. Create an action plan to achieve it. Think:  
i. What you will study?  
ii. How much time given?  
iii. When exactly?
2. Write down simple tasks.
3. Set a target frame to have each task completed.
4. Have a list of clearly defined written goals for each week.
5. Set a small number of goals for the first few weeks.
6. Then decide how you will achieve these goals! Ask yourself questions - what will I do/ what plan of action do I need to complete these goals?
7. Always aim higher than you think you can. You will amaze yourself at how well you can do!

**Once you have your goals agreed, you will find yourself more motivated & work harder to reach them!**



## How Much Should I Study?

This is a question I get asked a lot. Students worry about the amount of time they should spend on a **nightly /weekly basis**. Some subjects consume more of our time than others. Students panic that they are neglecting some of their subjects in preference to others.

Every student differs. It depends what points you are looking for and what your strengths are. Let's face it – **the subjects you dread or find difficult** are usually neglected or take a lot of time to keep up with it. It's not quantity but quality of study that counts. Many students find it very **beneficial to catch up at the weekend**, when they have more time available. It is advisable to complete your homework on a Friday evening if possible.

**It takes experimentation** to find out what suits you. Study times should suit your goals & academic needs.

Here's a rough guideline:  
1<sup>st</sup> Year: 1.5 hrs per day  
2<sup>nd</sup> Year: 2 hrs per day  
3<sup>rd</sup> Year: 2.5–3 hrs per day  
5<sup>th</sup> Year: 3–4 hrs per day  
6<sup>th</sup> Year: 3.5–5 hrs per day

This is just a **rough guideline** which should be personally adapted! The required time should include homework and revision. The hours should be increased nearing exams – a lot depends on the amount of points you are hoping to achieve.

# Keys to Being a Successful Student

How many times have we heard someone lament that there weren't enough hours in the day to get everything done? We can also recall days when time seemed to stand still and we thought it would never end. The facts are that **there are 24 hours in every day and 168 hours in every week** and it's the same for everyone! The issue for a busy student is to **maximise the effectiveness of the time spent studying**. This does not mean studying for every available hour in the week but finding the right **balance between study time & other activities**. It is also important that the time you spend studying gives you the maximum amount of learning.

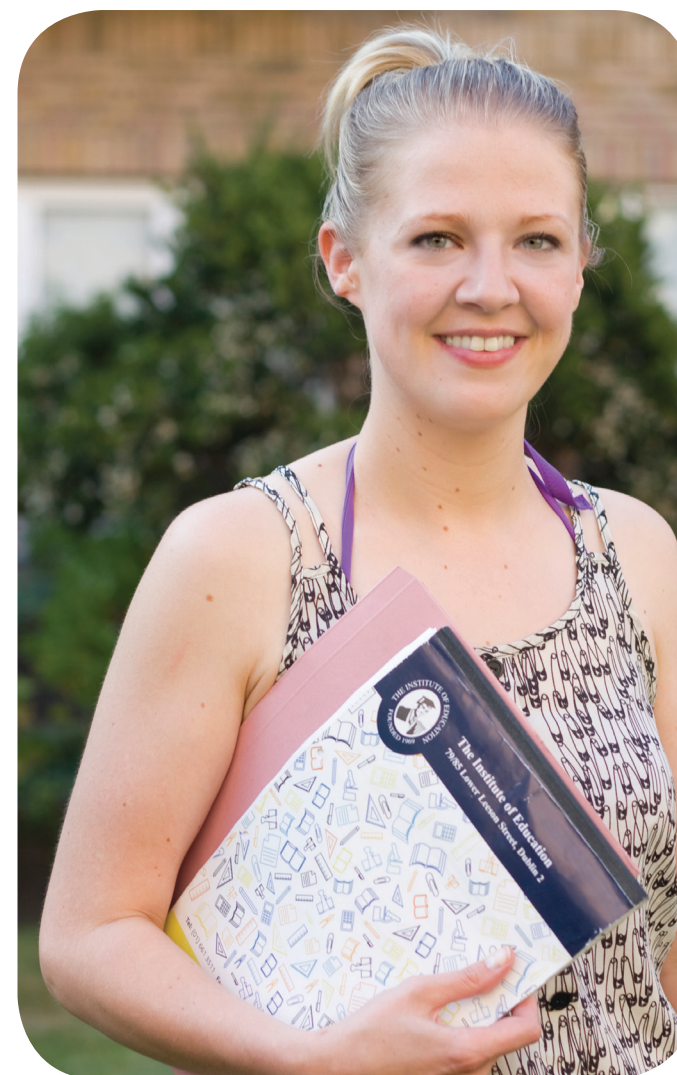
Let me pose some questions to you:

**How effective** do you believe your study techniques were in the past?

**If you continue to do what you did in the past, will you achieve your goals?**

Did you ever stand back and analyse what worked and what didn't work? For example you might have spent 2 hours deep in a topic only to realise that the learning from the last hour wasn't very effective.

**So, planning is the key** to getting the most from all your activities.



Take this space to quickly practice what we have been studying. Specify three personal goals here:

**Daily:**

**Weekly:**

**Term:**

## 1. Get Organised!

**The key to being a successful student is to get organised!** It might sound easy but it is really the secret to success! If you decide to have an organised approach to your studies from day one, you have immediately lessened your workload. You can achieve organisation by **setting realistic goals**, both **short term** and **long term**.

You should record these goals in a study planner under the headings '**Daily, Weekly and Term**'.

Your **daily plan** should hold a **day by day** account of your study progress.

You should prepare your study plan for the next day the night before i.e. list of goals

Your **weekly plan** should hold record of **approaching tests** and a list of things to be achieved that particular week. These tasks can be ticked off when completed and this is an effective way to see your progress.

Your **Term Calendar** is for a broader view and allows for forward planning. You can record all school assignments, tests, activities with their due dates so they are not forgotten.

## 2. Create a Study Plan

Another key to achieving effective study is to **draw up a realistic study time table that suits you!** This can seem very daunting at first but trust me it works. It reduces the stress levels, panic attacks and last minute cramming and makes you a much better student with more leisure time on your hands.

It is **best to be honest** on what you can handle study-wise. Do you use your study time to your best ability? Can you really concentrate for the required time? You are only fooling yourself if you

design a timetable that is too demanding for you to follow.

**1. Take into account at what time do you study best?** - Are you a morning or night person?

**2. It's wise to break up your study time and develop a regular routine.** It is generally recommended to study between 45- 55 min slots with a 5 minute break. It is a personal choice however as it depends on your individual attention span.

**3. By trying different things you can study cleverly.** Rather than study three chapters of geography altogether, you could break it up over the week. This will stop you getting bored and keep the topic

fresh in your mind.

**4. Break up big projects** i.e. art, history or geography, into four or five different stages. This will make your life so much easier in March/April when you have to complete your history special topic/ geography project. The list at this stage can be endless and with **all the ground work you have done** it will help you reap the benefits.

**5. Reward yourself** when you work hard, even if it means a small break. Your "rewards" should **motivate you** to work to enjoy what is to come!

6. If your plan doesn't work ask yourself why? Make some changes and try again. **Don't give up!**



# How to write good notes

It is important to have good note taking techniques. Your presentation is also very important:

- Keep them clear, neat and use colour. You should be able to revise the information at a quick glance later on.
- Number you points in lists – easier to learn than those not numbered.
- Leave a wide margin at the side of your notes to add extra details if necessary.
- Don't copy diagrams from books. It's a waste of time. Study the drawing and then draw it from memory.
- Leave lots of white spaces in your notes. Space your points out. This makes it easier to learn.
- Constant self-testing and regular revision of topics helps you to remember information.



## 3. Note Taking

When you study you should get into the habit of taking notes. By taking notes, it keeps you **focused**, helps your **concentration** and you have something to look back over.

Notes should be **key words / points**, kept in short form. These are easy to read and can be reviewed quickly.

Use your **class notes as a basis** when starting a new topic. These will help refresh your memory and deepen your understanding of the subject.

To save time **reread any notes/work** you already have on the topic you are going to learn.

## 4. Time Management

You must be **honest with yourself** and realistic when drawing up any timetable.

You have **168 hrs in a week**, roughly 56 of which is taken up by sleeping. (7 x 8 hours nightly). You must calculate your remaining free hours and divide these between study and relaxation. This can be done by completing the table on the next page.

Good tips for managing time:

- **Spend time** on planning and organising yourself.
- **Set Goals**
- Use a **to-do list** daily.
- **Prioritise** your goals/

time allocation.

- **Be flexible** – adapt your timetable if something unplanned comes up. Reschedule the missed hours.
- **Consider at what time you are at your best.** Then plan to study at this time when you will be most productive for effective time management.
- **Start as you mean to finish** – successfully!
- **Avoid being a perfectionist** – if something does not work, start again and look at it differently.

1. **Complete a typical week** for you below. **For each activity**, fill in the amount of **hours per day** spent doing this particular activity. Try to be as accurate as possible.
2. **Add up the hours** per day when finished and **the remaining hours** are the hours you have left for studying.
3. Now, **fill out your study plan** dividing the amount of hours between your subjects!

Daily Activities:	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Classes							
Sleeping							
Exercise/ Sport							
Work/ Job							
Family commitments							
Personal Care							
Meal preparation/ Eating							
Household chores							
Transportation (to school, training etc.)							
Relaxation (TV, Music etc.)							
Socialising & Friends.							
Other:							
Total no. of hours:	/24	/24	/24	/24	/24	/24	/24
Hours left for studying:							



SAMPLE WEEKLY PLANNER

DATE: 8-13 SEPTEMBER

SUBJECT	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
ENGLISH	Shakespeare - Othello (Deception & judgement notes)			Yeats - Revise themes in "Easter 1916" & "September 1913"		Frost -Revise class notes on "Birches" and "Spring Pools"	Shakespeare - Othello (idea maps)
IRISH	Revise today's class notes	Make flash cards for díospóireacht vocab		Practise filíocht roghnach using past papers	Practise picture sequences		Revise flash cards for popular question phrasing
MATHS		Algebra - Revise fractions pages 5-12 & do practise qs	Algebra - finish fractions pages 12-20 & practise qs		Algebra - quadratic equations	Algebra - quadratic graphs	Algebra - quadratic roots
FRENCH	Irregular verbs and l'imparfait - make flash cards		Revise flash cards and test (try reversing)	Practise journal entry (use past paper questions)		Oral Vocab - family, hobbies and school pages 12-20	
BIOLOGY			Plant Structure - make flash cards for chapter 1	Write up notes for today's experiment	Germination - revise notes and practise diagrams		Write notes plant reproduction pages 32-47
HISTORY		The Eucharistic Congress - revise notes up to page 18			Practise past paper exam questions on the Eucharistic Congress	Research Study Report	Research Study Report
CHEMISTRY	Write up notes for today's experiment		Revise this week's notes on Volumetric analysis			Practise past paper questions on volumetric experiments	Practise diagrams for volumetric experiments

BLANK WEEKLY PLANNER

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
ENGLISH							
IRISH							
MATHS							
SUBJECT 1							
SUBJECT 2							
SUBJECT 3							
SUBJECT 4							

# Subject Timetable

The best time to start with your study preparation is now. Waiting until later in the year will only make things more difficult for you in the long-term. This monthly study chart is dated from the first week in September. It can be a great help to

**fill in your study chart every Sunday evening**, in preparation for the week ahead. **Be specific** about what you plan to study in each subject. For example, in English in week 3 you might revise the poetry of Emily Dickinson. This chart

will provide you with an easy guide to what you will study each week. **Stick the timetable to a wall in your study area** and use it to plan your homework and study hours. Remember, **it's never too soon to begin your preparation!**

## SAMPLE MONTHLY PLANNER

MONTH:	SEPTEMBER 2014				SUBJECT:	ENGLISH (PAPER 2)			
	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4					
TO STUDY/REVISE	Shakespeare - Othello	Shakespeare - Othello	Poetry - Dickinson	Poetry - Frost					
TASKS:	Identify examples of judgement and deception	Essay writing	Identify themes	Describe key aspects					
TO DO:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revise class notes</li><li>Draw idea map for judgement</li><li>Draw idea for deception</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Answer question in Section I, E (ii) on 2008 paper using last week's idea map as an essay plan</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Revise notes on themes of death &amp; nature. Look at poems "A Bird came down the Walk" and "I felt a funeral, in my brain" and identify the main themes in each poem.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Draw idea map of key aspects from notes</li><li>Read "Mending Wall", "The Tuft of Flowers" and "The Road Not Taken" and look out for examples of the common aspects.</li></ul>					

## MONTHLY PLANNER:

MONTH: \_\_\_\_\_  
SUBJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
To Study/Revise:				
Tasks:				
To Do:				

Make your own monthly planner for each subject to help with your long-term learning and goal setting. Mark in important assignments and ongoing revision so that you remember to prepare in advance. Tick off each task as it is completed.

# Classroom Skills

Have you ever been in an exam situation, faced with a difficult question, and thought to yourself, 'wow, I wish I had paid attention to the teacher when they were covering this topic in class?' Do you find yourself nodding off in class and thinking that your teachers are not worth listening to? **Believe it or not, most learning is done in the classroom.** During the class, it is your job to **make the most of the time you spend there**, to listen actively, and to **take notes** and to later **reinforce the key points** you are now hearing. Good note-taking helps maintain concentration, helps you understand the information and it helps you recall the information you have learnt. **Good listening** is the single most useful skill you can have

in the classroom. Instead of just hearing what your teachers have to say, **listen** to it, **pay attention** and **mentally process** what is being said.

You will find that, **as you improve** your in-class attentiveness, listening, and note-taking skills, the study you have to do once you return home will be easier. Not only will this revision be more straightforward, but you will also have **a reduced workload** as your in-class organisation will begin to pay off. Just remember; **anything you can learn in the classroom, you don't have to spend time learning at home!** Using the few simple classroom skills outlined here will make your learning a lot easier.



# Remember!

- Remember, **the more** you learn in class, **the more** you will gain from your study at home.
- Be a good listener.** Listening requires you to pay attention and think about what you hear.
- Be ready** when you come to class with all the necessary books.
- Make sure you have **completed all homework** or **previous topics covered**.
- Review your notes** from previous classes.
- Read ahead** if you know what material is to be covered.
- If you **have a question** to ask, **ask it!**
- Be willing to learn** -Your attitude is very important to **empower you** to learn – so come to class with a positive attitude!

Listen with **questions in your mind** about the topic in question. **Ask yourself questions** and try to put the material into relevant context i.e.

- What do I already know about the subject?
- What do I need to know?
- What are the important details?
- How could I apply my learning in the exam?
- What don't I understand about this?



# Be Proactive in Class



Taking good notes helps maintain concentration, helps us understand the information noted and allows us recall the information we have learnt!

## Take Notes!

Note taking will not only help you concentrate and learn but will also lessen your workload at home!

- Jot down key notes in each lesson and don't wait to be told!
- Don't just sit there - **do something!**
- **Focus on what your teacher is saying.** Try not to daydream.
- Become an **active learner** and **pay attention** even when you're not interested in the topic being discussed!
- You can think faster than your teacher can speak. **Use this** to your advantage.
- Take good written notes about what your teacher is saying.
- **Work through your class** and **repeat points** that you hear.
- **Learn to multi-task!** This is a very useful skill that can be applied when faced with doing many things at once in class!
- In class **listen-think-write** down key points.

**What points are worth noting and how do I keep up to speed** with what the teacher is saying? Use the following guidelines to help you develop good note-taking skills in the classroom

1. **Listen carefully to your teacher in class for clues** of key phrases that will tell you if a certain point is particularly important or not such as "The most important points are..." or "don't forget to note this down ...."

2. Listen for points that the teacher **repeats, emphasizes or writes up** on the board.

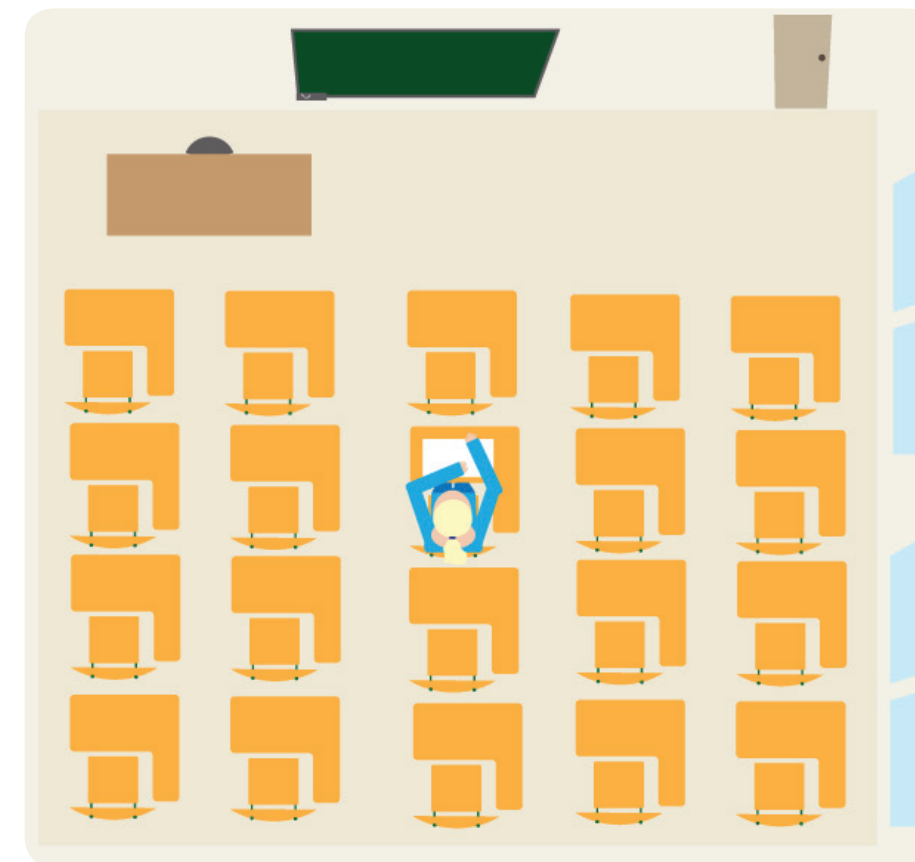
3. **Note any reference** made to **exam type questions** and practise them at home in exam conditions.

## Your Seat in Class

Where you sit in class is **vital for your concentration** and, with the **right chosen seat**, you can improve your class performance greatly! The easiest thing to do in class is to daydream or let your mind wander. This will cost you a lot in your overall performance at the end of the year. So **choose your classroom seat wisely!** Bring a positive attitude to your classroom learning and you will reap the rewards

- **Avoid the back** of the room.
- **Don't sit beside the window**, you'll get distracted!
- **Stay away** from the "messers".

Class is **where most of your time is spent**, with the experts that specialise in their subjects! **Don't waste that opportunity!** Make the most of it, stay focused and you will see the value of it!



## Keep the mind from wandering

**"It's Mind over Matter". Try to make your goals achievable and realistic. You need to know your own capabilities.**

If you absolutely must, change task when your mind begins to wander.

When you find yourself daydreaming or your concentration has lapsed, pinch yourself lightly to bring yourself back to base.

Draw an 'X' on a page every time this happens. Try to keep yourself aware and gradually your mind will wander less and less. Keep a record and see how you are progressing.

Use whatever system works for you. It is good to have one. You need to keep yourself focused and make sure you channel your attention on the areas that need to be done.

If your mind wanders a lot, note it, stand up and move away from your books. This helps bring you back to the task at hand.

4. **Jot down points quickly** so you can include all the important information.

7. **Circle or highlight** important terms/ dates and details.

5. Use **rough brain storms/ idea maps** with key words.

8. Use **abbreviations** when possible

6. **Make margin notes** when working from a text book.

9. Use **symbols** when possible i.e. % percentage.



# Improving your homework and concentration

It is often difficult for people to focus on a single task for a long period of time and the art of studying is no different. When your attention wanders, what you are reading will often not register and you will have little memory of what you have just covered.

**It is possible to go through the motions for hours,** but end up with very little achieved. The traditional approach to studying involves burying your head in books for hours at a time and, as a result, it can be viewed as

boring and uninteresting. In these cases your work will just not be productive & you will have wasted valuable time.

However, there are ways to **eliminate distractions** and **improve your concentration** on your studies. If you are reading something that you consider dull or boring, you will most likely find it difficult. This can often be because you are tired and, if so, you should postpone the work until a time when you are refreshed and ready to tackle it again. Perhaps try taking on

a different topic or subject for now! On the other hand, you just may not have prepared the material adequately. In that case, you know what you need to do!

**Follow the tips in this section** and you should be able to develop better powers of concentration in yourself. Real and proper concentration is developed slowly. With proper preparation and a strong desire to do your best, your homework and study results will improve dramatically.



## Helpful Tips

**Schedule breaks.** Take a ten minute break after every 50 minutes. If this is too long take a 5 minute break after every 25/30 minutes. Everyone is different. Do what suits you but be disciplined.

**Most people are more productive when they organise their study time** into short blocks, with a small break between them. **Break your tasks up** into small, manageable sections.

**Keep active while studying.** Take notes, ask yourself questions or try closing the book and trying to recall from memory what you have done. **Use study cards or brain storms/idea maps.** They will help you recall the essential information and are very effective revision tools.

**Keep a record** of your time, so that you maximise the best usage of it. **Stick with a task until it is completed.** Don't leave your study place until the task is done.

**Reward yourself** or take a small break after achieving this task. Have some nice

treats for yourself for goals you achieve. This will help keep you motivated and encourage you on your way.

**Do something different** when you take a study break- leave your study area and walk around for a few moments/ listen to some music etc.

## Effective Studying

After each task or page read, stop, check back to see what you can recall.

**Ask yourself questions** to keep yourself on track. **Constant testing** on what you are learning helps.

Do the **most difficult homework first.** Get this out of the way so you can see everything else as easier and more enjoyable!

**Concentrate on one thing** at a time.

Use **page markers and dividers** to keep everything organised and easily assessable.

**Mark/ take notes** on what you read.

**Ask Yourself:** "Am I getting the best use out of my time right now?" If not then why? 'What can I do to get the maximum here for me?'

**Visualise** your goals.

Don't be too hard on yourself. Old habits are hard to change. Reward your successes and work on changing what you find hard to do. **Your time is very valuable** - use it wisely to achieve your goals.

Keep a trusted friend or family member up to date on your progress - **Let them know** when you have achieved an important goal!

**Success breeds success - even little ones.**



**Establish a daily routine** that suits your personal needs/ ability. **Stick to it.**

Have a **fixed place** for nothing but study- Free of any distractions.

Your study place, if possible, should have **a desk, a comfortable chair and good lighting and heating** when needed.

Try and **keep this area for study only.** It should not be a place where you do other things. Then **you will always associate it with effective study.**

**Avoid clutter** as this can cause chaos when you least need it.

**Put away anything distracting.** Turn your phone off and look forward to it during your breaks. Keep social networking sites for your breaks!

Have your **books and stationary** on hand. Time spent looking for things, is not time spent studying.

Have your daily / weekly planner **where you can see it.** Check off completed tasks / study periods as you finish them.

Once you have created an effective /suitable study area that is **free of audio and visual distractions**, you are ready to start!



# Study Environment Survey

The purpose of this survey is to show you what makes a good study place and to help you evaluate where you achieve the most productivity from your study

**Pick the two places where you study most** such as after-school study, your room, your local library, school library, study periods, class time, another room at home etc.  
1) Label one A and the other B.  
2) Answer each question, by placing a tick or check mark if the statement is mostly true or an 'X' if the statement is mostly false in the corresponding box for each place.  
(Both boxes can be ticked for A and B if both are true).



A. \_\_\_\_\_  
B. \_\_\_\_\_

	A	B
There are a few distractions, such as phone, computer or TV in this location.		
Others rarely interrupt me when I study here.		
This is a quiet location, with almost no interruptions from people talking etc.		
I take limited breaks when I study here.		
I study here regularly during the week.		
I tend to keep breaks short when I study here.		
I rarely talk with people when I study here.		
The temperature is comfortable for studying here.		
The chair and table are comfortable for studying.		
The lighting here is good.		

Now, add up all the “trues” for each study place picked and the results show which place is better suited for studying.

Three ways I could make the most of my time in class:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Three ways I could make the most of my study time at home:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Three ways I could improve my study techniques:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Three short and long-term goals I could set myself:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Plan to look** at individual subjects on the basis of what is the most effective way for you **to assimilate the key information** and the best ways to retrieve the results on exam day!

It's not necessarily about being the best reader but it is about getting the most out of what you do read!

**Every Text or Chapter you read must have a defined purpose. Ask yourself the following questions:**

1. **Why** am I reading this article, chapter, or book?
2. **What** do I want to achieve from this?
3. **What** do I need to know about this topic?
4. **How** will this information improve my overall knowledge of the topic?
5. **How** will I use this information when I'm being examined on this topic?
6. **Do I have** this information condensed (flash cards/summary notes) for rapid revision later on?

## Section 2: Reading Techniques



### Making the most of what you read!

One of the key steps in our early education was **learning to read**. Most of our first text books used **simple language & perhaps visuals** to give us one of the most important skills that we will ever learn.

What happened after that is that the words became longer and more plentiful but in some respects we **were never taught** to develop our reading techniques. **In the same way that we sometimes hear but do not listen we may also "Read" words but do not necessarily assimilate the full meaning or the context.**

**How often** have you spent time reading a topic and at the end struggled to remember or retrieve the learning from the exercise. At a time when **every minute is precious** we must ensure we

get the maximum learning from the time spent on any text. Now is the time to practice the concept of **reading to learn through effective reading skills!**

**Step back** from the daunting task of reading the **vast quantities of material** across all your subject choices. By simply **using the various techniques** below, these should help you absorb or recall the information in the most practical way!

There is also a difference between studying **a language** and say **a technical subject**. Languages are very much about the vocabulary, sentence structure and grammatical concepts while a specialised subject may rely on recall of visuals, charts, numerics and facts.

Scanning Techniques	Skimming the Text	Reading for Full Comprehension	Summarise	Light Reading
<p>Looking for <b>key data (formula / page / tables / headings)</b>. You may then proceed to skim or read the text in greater detail.</p> <p><b>Learning tip:</b> <b>Tables, charts and idea maps</b> are useful to identify important and relevant parts of a required topic and can be an excellent aid to <b>help save time in your search for key information</b>.</p>	<p>A <b>rapid search technique</b> which helps you quickly cover large amounts of information with a view to gaining an overview of the text.</p> <p><b>Learning tip:</b> <b>identify key words &amp; phrases</b> which will ensure that further reading for comprehension will be time well spent! This will also help better recall of the full body of the text when revisiting.</p>	<p>You are reading the text fully and in greater detail. You are required to understand key words and phrases – such as in foreign language texts – or need to pick up key technical information – such as in maths and science subjects.</p> <p><b>Learning tip:</b> Look out for <b>meaning and context</b>. Take note of these. Memorise words or phrases that will “trigger” better recall of the overall text or article especially at exam time.</p>	<p>Once you have gained a full understanding of the material, it can be a good idea to summarise your learning in the form of study notes, flashcards or audio recordings.</p> <p><b>Learning Tip:</b> Summarise the topic with exam questions in mind. Making notes in the margins will help identify key information which will be useful at future readings</p>	<p>You are reading <b>supplementary material</b> or <b>background information</b> on the topic in question. This can help deepen your understanding &amp; provide extra details for answering exam questions.</p> <p><b>Learning Tip:</b> Reading a novel, magazine or newspaper article in your spare time would be an example of the above. The additional information can be the difference in getting those extra marks at exam time.</p>

Note below a subject area where you could effectively use:

Scanning \_\_\_\_\_

Skimming \_\_\_\_\_

Light Reading \_\_\_\_\_





# Applying Different Types Of Reading



Try using the following for your next learning opportunity - **SSRCRR**

1. **Scan** information e.g. Text book to find the chapter relevant to your topic.
2. **Skim** the chapter or text to ensure that required information is there and that the time spent reading will ensure you are not wasting valuable time.
3. **Read** for comprehension so you understand the detail of the piece.
4. **Clarify** the accuracy of your learning. Try to visualise questions that could be asked!
5. **Recap** or recall what you have learned.
6. **Revisit** (maybe in a later session) the text to ensure that your learning has been robust!

**Learning tips:** Jot down **key words for your flash cards**. Consider using a pencil if you wish to highlight items in your text book.

Some text books will have a very **useful summary at the end of the chapter** - great for **revision & learning keys words** to help expand your answers in exams.

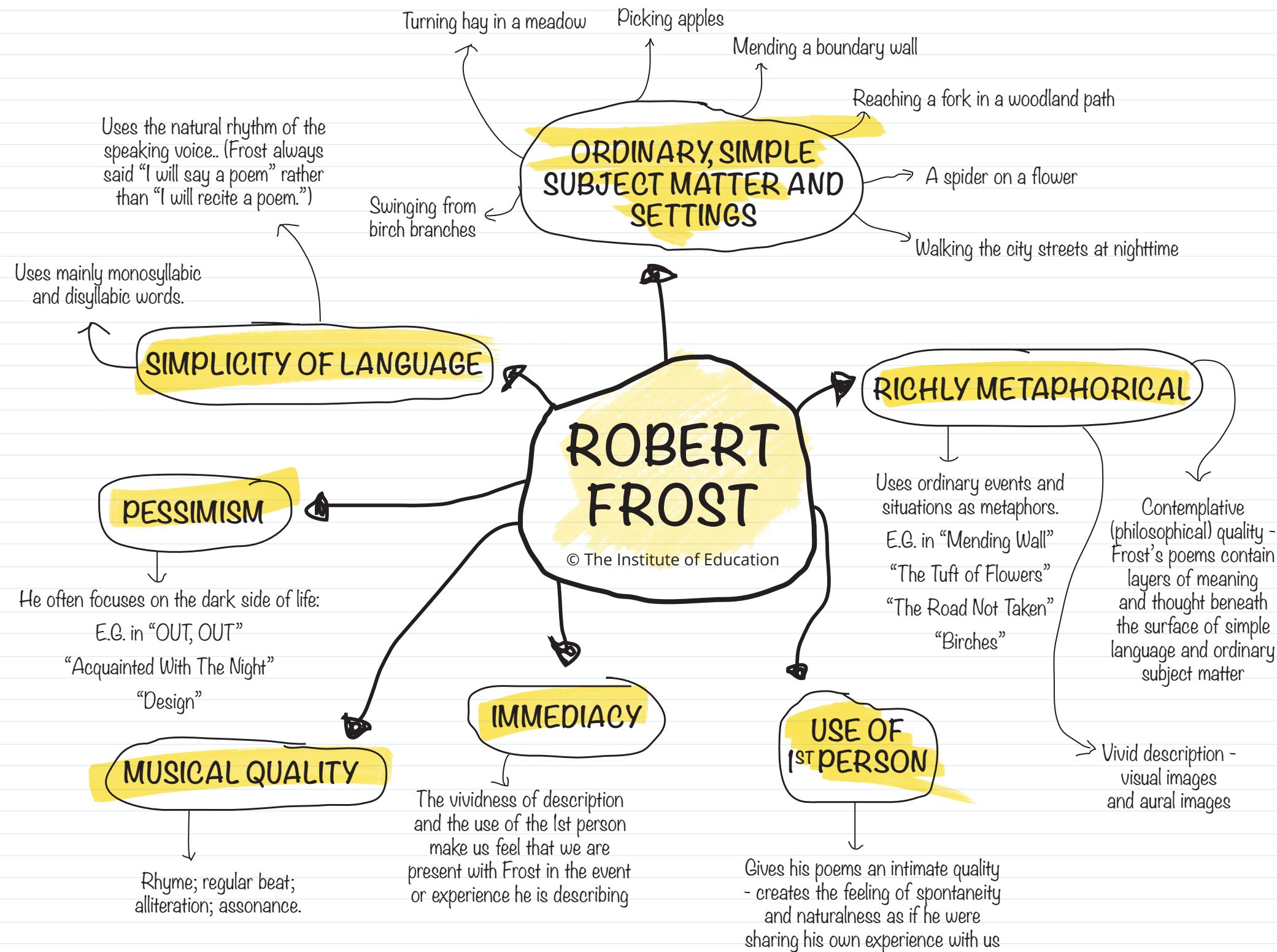
## Mix it up!

- **Why not recite your answers aloud. Create a visual** of a main character reciting a key line or quote from a play. It will help with recall during your exam.
- Use a class mate or friend to test yourselves on information learned or explain it to somebody. It really works!

Know your optimum learning time when you are reading large amounts of information - take a break & then **recap** to ensure that your concentration is good and that you've not wasted a valuable study session!

**Know what works for you! Be disciplined, the more you apply the above techniques the more it will become second nature and the better you'll learn.**

## SAMPLE IDEA MAP: ROBERT FROST'S POETRY



## There's an app for that

As it becomes increasingly common in almost every area of our lives, it's important to make the most of the latest technology to aid your study. Whether online through your PC browser or offline as a smartphone app, there is a wide range of resources available to help you improve your study results. The websites and apps listed here are great companions to powerful and effective study. Just remember to stick to the plans you have set out for yourself and not get distracted when using a phone or computer to revise.

### MEMORY TECHNIQUES - FLASHCARDS

quizlet.com

This is a free resource for creating your own flashcards or studying one of millions of decks created by others - including everything from irregular French verbs to geographical features. If you sign up for a free account it's possible to create multiple decks and track your progress over time. You can add pictures, customise them however you want, generate custom tests and printable material to help with continued study.

### HOMEWORK SKILLS AND TIME MANAGEMENT

myhomeworkapp.com

myHomework is an app that helps you to manage your school life in digital form. It allows you to track your homework, tests, projects and lessons and it reminds you well in advance of when assignments are due. It will even let you input your personal class schedule so you're never late for class again!

### MEMORY TECHNIQUES - IDEA MAPS

bubbl.us  
mindmup.com

There is no substitute for drawing one with your own hands, but these online services allow you to create colourful idea maps to save, print or share. There is almost no learning curve and they're both free to use.

### GOAL SETTING

any.do

This app helps you to easily create to-do lists, priority reminders and to organise your day before it begins. Setting achievable goals relies on being well organised and this app is the perfect way to start getting on top of things.

### READING SKILLS

dictionary.com

The best app for working on reading skills is simply a dictionary. The dictionary.com app is not only great for finding the meaning of a particular word or phrase, but also offers many other functions such as a thesaurus as well.

# Learning & Memory Techniques

Memory is like any other discipline, if you don't consistently use it, it can under-perform and let you down when you need it most. Not only this, but we are never taught how to properly use it. Like any other worthwhile skill, **improving memory & recall** will take a little bit of effort at first, but will soon become second nature to you. It will soon be easy to increase your focus, avoid cramming, and structure your study time well. Apart from these basics, there are many more useful tips for memorising your way to success!

Your memory works in 3 very simple steps: **Information in, Information storage and Information recall**. All of these aspects are important for success in your exams. So how do we improve our ability to store and recall information? There are many different techniques and I can guarantee you that there are ones to help every student!

Let's discuss some of the best methods for gathering and storing information in the first place. A small amount of time spent now on figuring out what works for you will reward you later as you approach exams.

## Are you a visual or verbal learner?

Think about the things in life that you remember vividly and in full detail! Is it information in the form of pictures and text? Or is it a speech from the radio or news reader on the TV?



### Verbal Learner

You learn best from asking questions and hearing answers.

You can improve study performance by reading texts and key points **aloud, talking to others** about what you have learned, **recording your notes** and playing them back on your mp3 player, and through memory techniques such as **mnemonics**.

### Visual Learner

You learn best from what you see and write down.

You will learn most effectively through the use of **diagrams**, clearly laid out notes, **visual organisers**, **colour-coded** bullet points and study techniques such as **idea-mapping** and **flashcards**.





# Information In & Storage

No matter how you learn best, it's always a great idea to **focus on learning in more ways than one** e.g. Find ways to take in information visually and verbally.

Read aloud to yourself as you take notes and learn the same info in the form of idea maps and flashcards.

The more connections you create and storage areas you use, the easier it is for you to recall the information on cue in the exam.

Approaching material with a **strong interest** and a **high level of focus** will help you to remember more details. The **opening and closing**

**paragraphs** will usually contain good summaries of the material covered.

**End of chapter questions** highlight the most important things that you need to know.

**Teach what you have learned** to another person. This can be another student or even a family member, it's not important who!

In teaching somebody else, you have to approach the material in a different way and this helps create new links to the material in your brain. Not only that, but teaching others can help reveal gaps in your own knowledge that you were unaware of.

Teaching somebody else is very similar to writing in an exam, when you have to explain things to the examiner!

Try to **connect new information** to things that you already know. This could be in understanding the relationship between two geographic features or why certain Spanish verbs have similar changes in the past tense.

By establishing a relationship between a new idea and existing thoughts, you can strengthen your understanding and more easily recall this in the future.

# Information Recall

Once you've started learning all of this information, it's time to begin working on your **information recall**. Having good memory recall means that you will be able to quickly and efficiently remember facts during the exam and present them to the examiner in the best way possible.

**Keep learning and practicing.** It's important to keep using the material that you have learnt. **Examinations.ie**, for example, is a great resource

for past papers, marking schemes and practicing under exam conditions. This is why it's important to have a regular revision schedule. There are a number of methods to test your recall. Using an idea map or brainstorm, **write down everything you can remember without consulting your book** or notes.

**Check** what you left out. **Repeat** these two steps, focusing more on missing details each time.

When you can recall **all of the essential points**, you have it well learnt.

**Eat healthily.** A healthy diet contributes to a healthy brain, and thus improves your memory recall noticeably. Foods that are **high in antioxidants** -- broccoli, spinach, and berries, for example -- and **Omega-3 fatty acids** (which can be taken in capsule form) aid healthy brain functioning.

# Memory Techniques



## Acronyms

Acronyms are **words** formed from the **first letter of the first word of each point / fact you want to remember**. It can be a unique or real word, as long as it is memorable to you.

### How to form one:

1. Write out the facts/ details you need to remember.
2. **Underline the first letter of the first word of each fact.**
3. **Arrange the underlined letters to form a real word** or a word that makes sense to you.

E.g. **MRSVANDERTRAMP** is an acronym which helps us to remember the verbs that take Être in French (**m**onter, **r**ester, **s**ortir, **v**enir, **a**ller, **n**aitre, **d**escendre, **e**ntre, **r**entrer, **t**omber, **r**etourner, **a**rriver, **m**ourir and **p**artir).

You can also form an **acronymic sentence** to

remember information in a certain order.

**HOMES** is an acronym that helps us remember the five great lakes of America, for example, and the sentence "**H**ungry **O**ld **M**an **E**ats **S**teak" also helps to remember the five lakes: **H**uron, **O**ntario, **M**ichigan, **E**rie and **S**uperior.

## FIVE GREAT LAKES OF AMERICA:

1. Huron
2. Ontario
3. Michigan
4. Erie
5. Superior

## HOMES

## HUNGRY OLD MAN EATS STEAK

## VERBS THAT TAKE ETRE:

## MRS VANDERTRAMP

- M - monter
- R - rester
- S - sortir
- V - venir
- A - aller
- N - naitre
- D - descendre
- E - entre
- R - rentrer
- T - tomber
- R - retourner
- A - arriver
- M - mourir
- P - partir



## Flashcards

**Flashcards** are one of the best ways to learn and study. They are quick to use, portable, and can help you learn difficult facts very easily. If made properly, they will greatly increase **the speed** of your learning. They can be used when travelling or in any other “spare time” when you might normally get nothing done. In fact, flashcards are most effective when used in small intervals i.e. 10 minutes here and there.

Using flashcards to learn items of information and then test yourself on these facts has **several advantages** over simply reading the information from the book or notes:

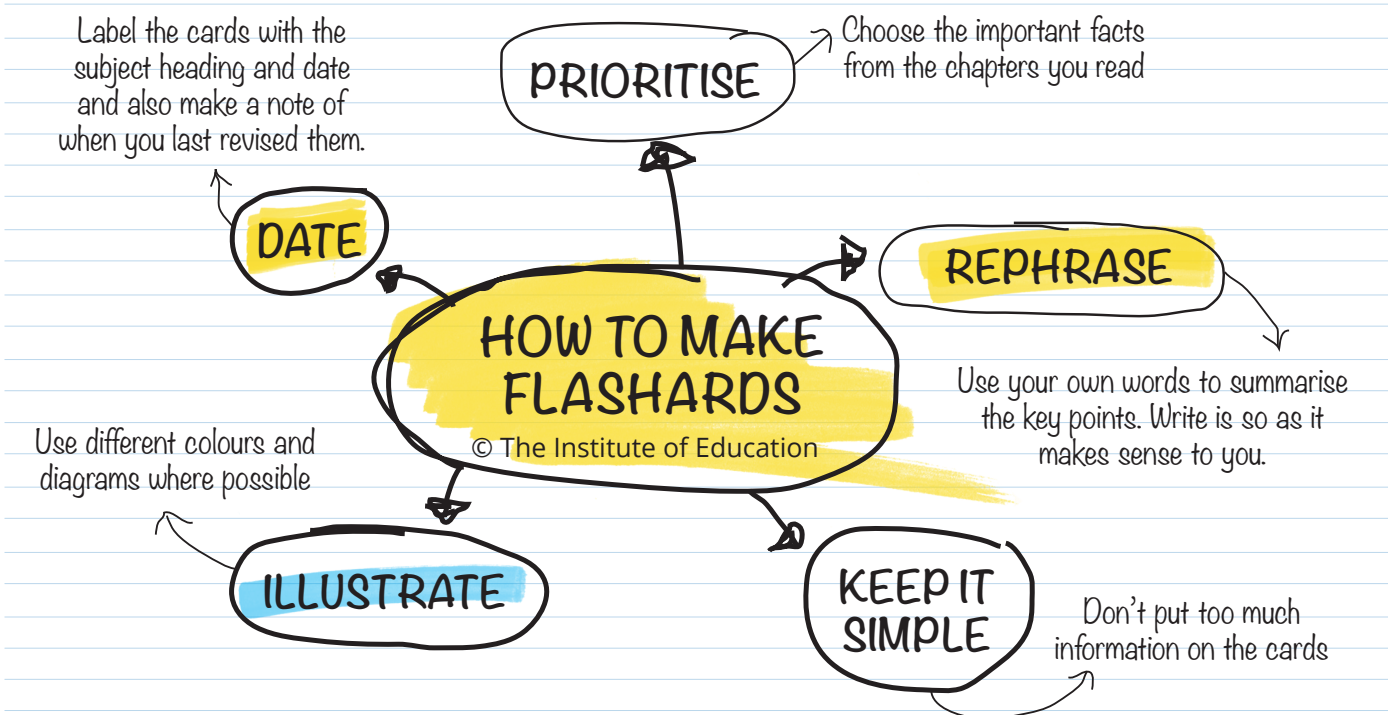
- The method is reversible i.e. instead of English to French, you can try testing yourself on French to English translations.
- The answer is hidden on the other side of the card so you can easily tell if you know it or not.
- Flashcards turn simple facts into interesting questions, so you have to **THINK** as you answer.

Sometimes students approach flashcards in the wrong way. For example, they often put **too much information** on each side. Follow these simple tips below to studying with flashcards and soon you'll be taking in huge amounts of information almost without even trying!

1. Each card should only have **1 question** and **1 main answer** – try to avoid large blocks of text. It's a good idea to put some relevant information on the answer side. This can be seen in the picture below which has 'verbs that decline like courir'.
2. Keep a pile of blank cards on your desk when studying. When you come across something that you don't know, take a minute to make a flashcard for this fact. If you **do it straight away** then you don't have to worry about it later!
3. Make sure to keep your flashcards in your bag at all times. Since flashcards are **portable** and easy to use, you can study at any time i.e. while waiting for class to begin, for the bus home, or watching some TV at the end of the day.
4. Create **two different piles** as you study your cards. Place all of the cards you know into one pile and all of the cards you got incorrect into the other.
5. You should now go through the incorrect pile in more detail and try again to commit these facts to your memory.
6. Once you've revised the incorrect pile, take both piles and shuffle them together. The next time you study them, repeat the same steps with correct and incorrect cards.
7. Eventually, you will make very few mistakes while revising your cards. A good strategy then is to take all of your incorrect cards from every subject, and place them in one pile. You now have all of your potential mistakes in one place, and it's even easier to eliminate them than before!
8. A good sample review schedule is to review the cards again after **1 day**, then **3 days**, then one week, then **3 weeks**, then **1 month**, then **3 months**, and then **6 months**. Come exam preparation time, you can revise the cards more frequently.

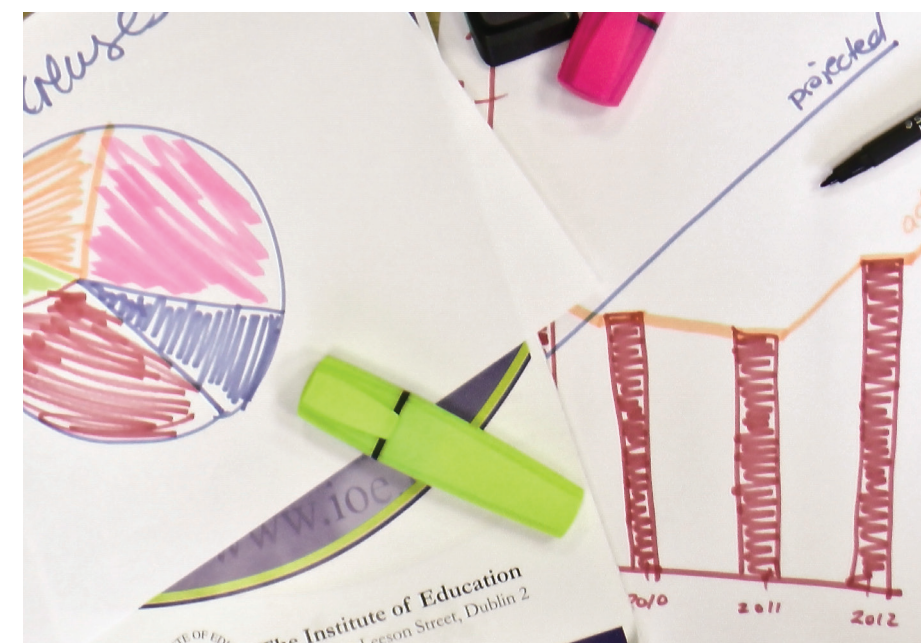


## SAMPLE IDEA MAP: HOW TO MAKE FLASH CARDS



## Audio Recording

A lot of students find it beneficial to record themselves reciting information, facts, essays or language material on their phones or tablets and then play it back at various times e.g. while travelling, going for a walk etc.



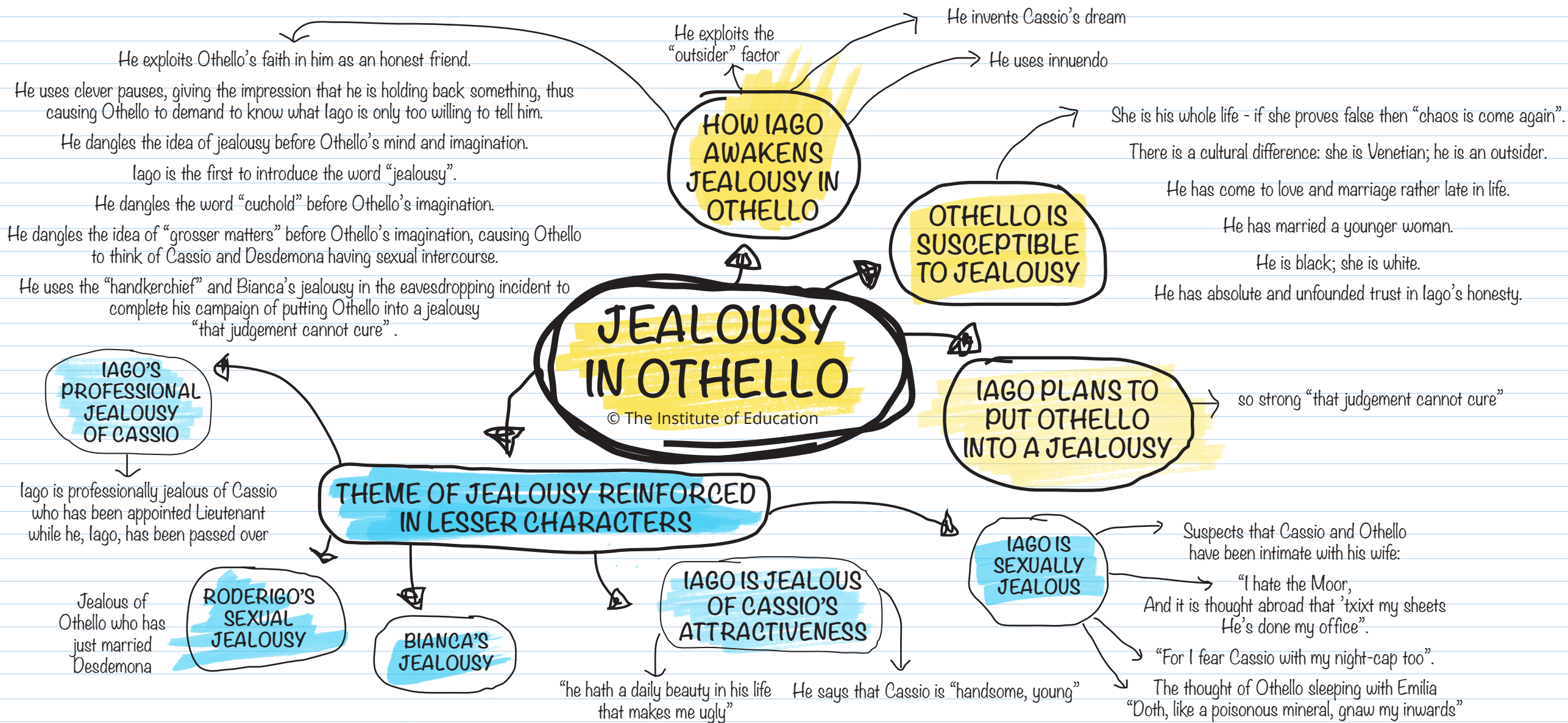
## Visual Organisers

**Visual organisers** are simple drawings or formats used to **represent information** and they help to show **connections between ideas**. These include: **Tables, Charts, Graphs, Timelines, Idea Maps, Pie Charts, Sketches** and more.

Visual organisers are not suitable for constant use in every subject and topic area, but are a great tool to use in areas you find difficult to understand using plain notes.



## SAMPLE IDEA MAP: JEALOUSY IN OTHELLO (EXTENDED)



## How to draw an idea map

1. Begin at the centre of an A4 page in landscape orientation; write down your **central concept** in the middle of the page and circle it, box it in, or mark it in some way.
2. Surrounding this central concept, write down any **main ideas** which relate to it. These can then be attached to the centre using **branches**. Any of these ideas can then be expanded out using **sub-branches**.
3. It is a good idea to **colour code your branches** i.e. one colour for the central concept, a different colour for the surrounding ideas, and so on.
4. The **branches** should not be uniform and straight, but rather curved and overlap each other. **This presents the information in a natural and intuitive way, which makes it easier for you to recall later.**
5. Feel free to use small notes and images at various points to clarify points of information.
6. Try to refrain from too many layers of branches and sub-branches. **The goal of idea mapping is to simplify the information delivery process, rather than complicate it.**

## Idea Mapping

Idea mapping is the use of a diagram which is drawn to represent facts, words or other ideas linked to a central concept, around which they are arranged in a circular pattern. It is not only simple to understand, but also extremely effective for use in your studies.

In an idea map, information on a topic or subject is represented visually on the page; this helps you retain more of the information and it's more interesting for you to study as well. Furthermore,

**each concept is placed in the right location** (regardless of the order in which it is thought of). In fact, studies have shown that students who study while using idea maps and other graphical representations of information **recall more information** than those students who study only the teacher's notes or their own written summaries of the material.

**But what can we use idea maps for?**  
This method of arranging and presenting information is very useful for studying and preparing the general structure of essays and

answers before answering. Above we have prepared a sample map using the play Macbeth. It presents, visually, the theme of Disorder in Macbeth. Studying this map can help you simplify something as complex as a Shakespearean play, and is a great additional study tool to your teacher's typed notes.

**Idea maps can also be used with great success in the following areas:**

- Note taking
- Brainstorming (either individually or in groups)
- Studying and memorization
- Researching projects

- Problem solving
- Increasing Creativity

Try to use **as many different colours, drawings and symbols as possible** when creating your idea map. Don't worry about creating a work of art, just a memorable representation of the topic which you will remember easily come exam time.

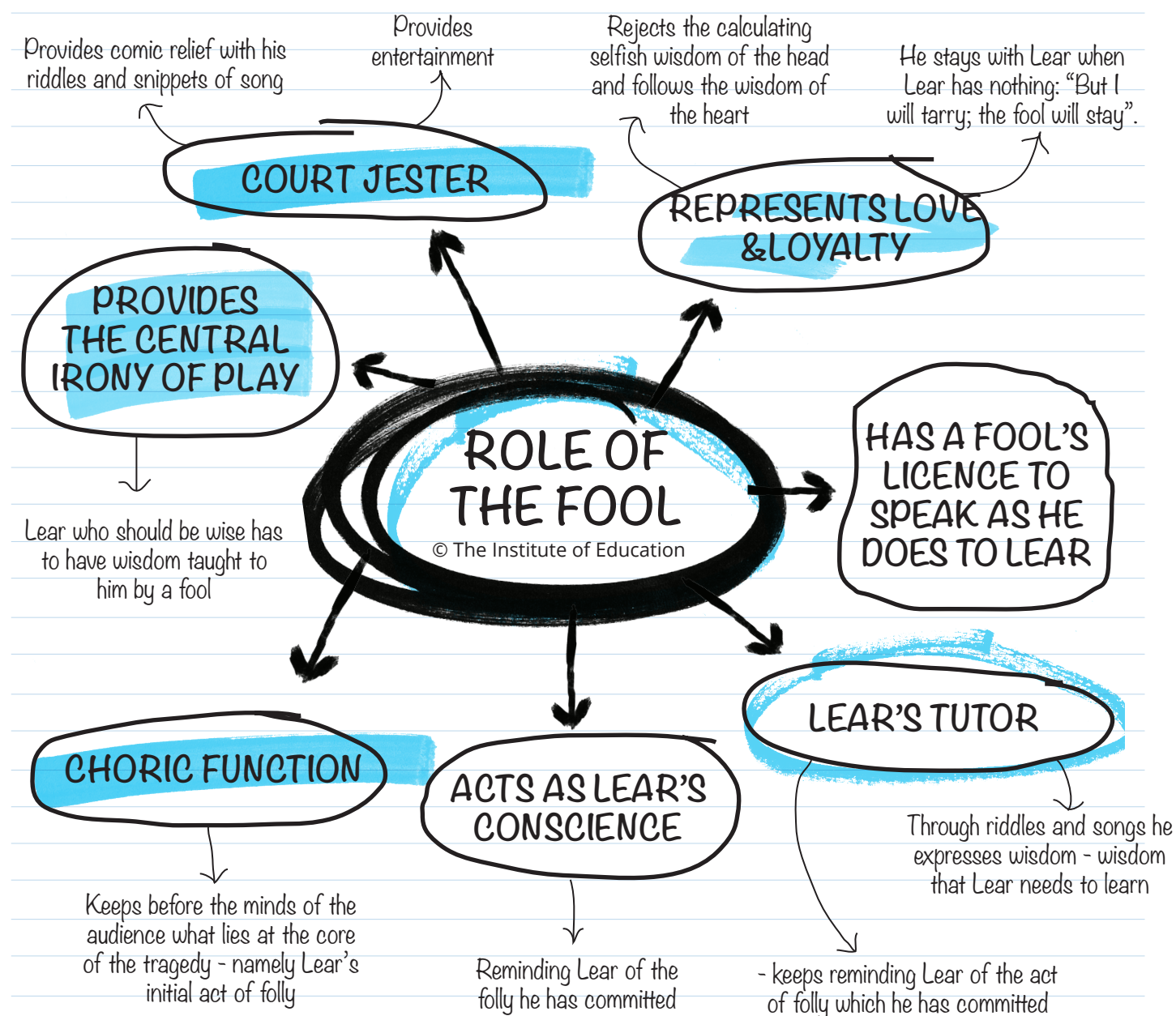
Also, **keep the sentences/idea labels as short as possible**. If you can, try keeping them to just one phrase or even a single word. Your idea map will be much more effective if you keep it that way.

Finally, try not extend your diagram too far, as this can get complicated and lead to confusion. It is preferable, instead, to take an existing idea from your diagram and use this as the central concept of a new idea map layout.

So, why not try and create your own idea map. Follow the few guidelines and don't worry about doing it "correctly" - all that matters is that you engage your brain a little more while making notes, and make it a little more enjoyable for yourself to be studying.

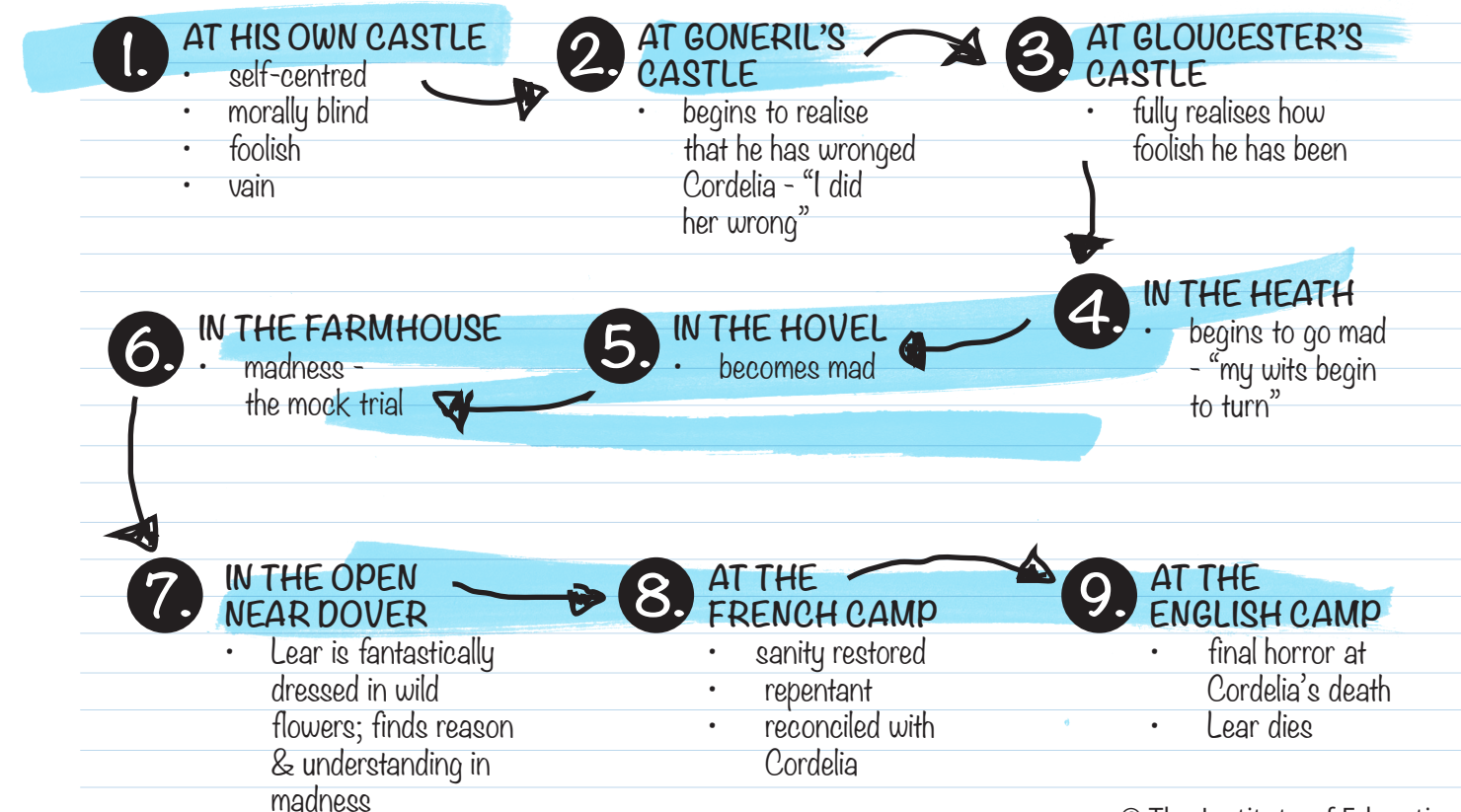


## SAMPLE IDEA MAP: KING LEAR



## SAMPLE TIMELINE: KING LEAR

### TIMELINE OF LEAR'S JOURNEY FROM VANITY AND MORAL BLINDNESS TO SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND MORAL VISION



© The Institute of Education

### Timeline Diagram

There are many ways to arrange information visually. Each student should experiment and discover what works best for them.

Above, you'll find an example of a timeline diagram. Using the theme of redemption in Shakespeare's King Lear, we can see a visual representation of the undertaking of a journey

toward establishing a sense of redemption. Our timeline clearly illustrates the nine main stages in Lear's journey of self-realisation, presented in the chronological order and with examples and quotes.

## Pace Yourself

If you decided to run a marathon, you would pace yourself to finish the race and not run out of energy early on. A similar approach is the best way to tackle the exams. Here are some common guidelines which can help you **pace yourself** properly:

In your studies, too many loose ends and poor organisation can be overwhelming, and stressful. Creating goals and overcoming fears of failure will help clear your thoughts, and you will soon be more productive and experience reduced levels of stress.

Remember, don't be afraid to harness the positive, energising effects of stress and use it to help you achieve your goals. However, if you believe that you cannot overcome your stress, please seek help from someone you trust- a parent, close friend, or teacher.

## Study-life Balance

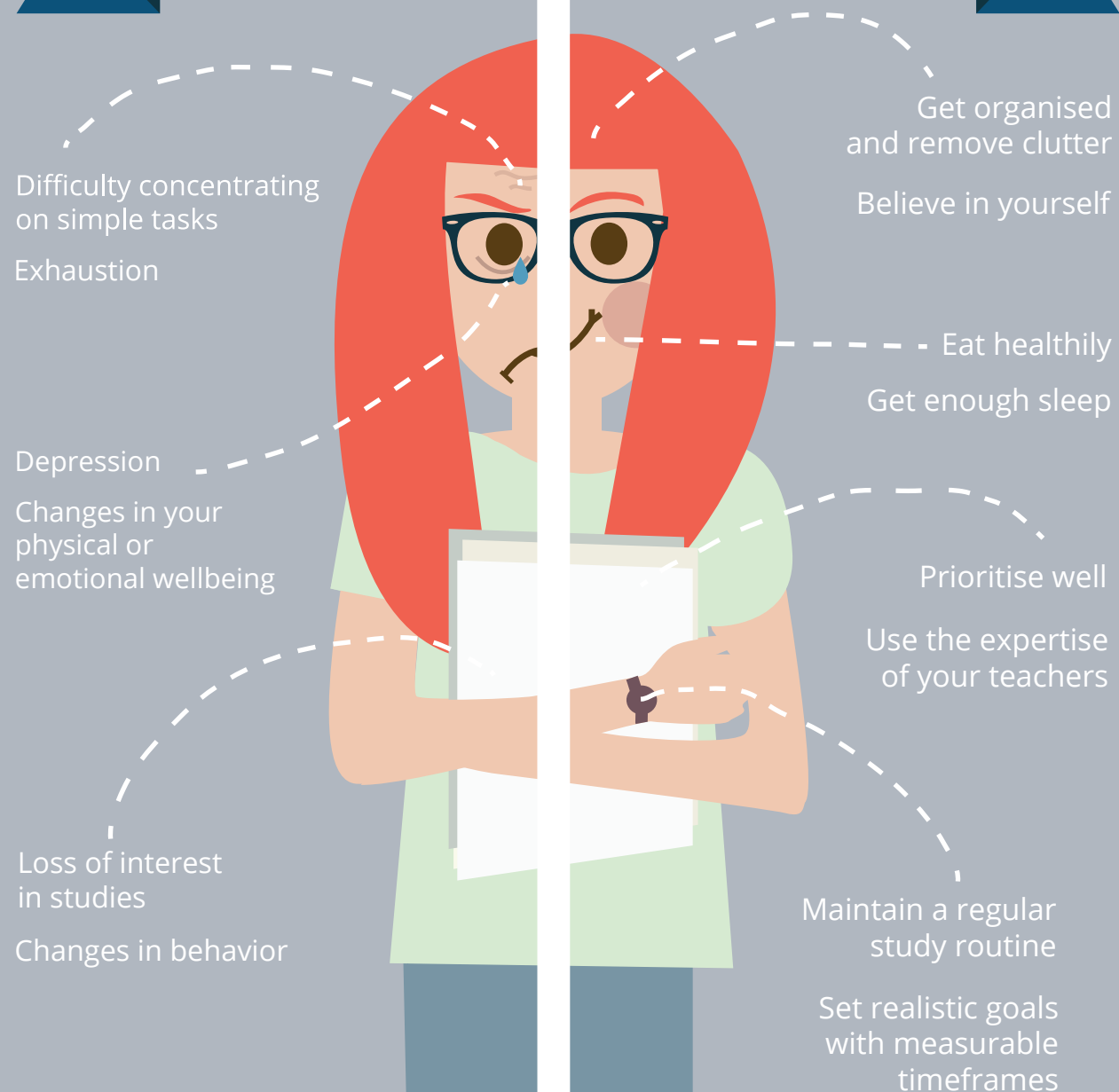
When you achieve a **study-life balance** it means that you are optimising your academic work, while spending time with your family, having a balanced social life, and participating in sports and other activities.

Everything outside of your studies contributes to your mental well-being and helps to minimise stress. Nobody studies for 24 hours a day and getting the right balance in your life means that you will get the maximum benefit from the time spent on study.

The best approach is simply to study when you are meant to be studying and to relax when you are meant to be relaxing. Enjoy your breaks when you take them, switch off for a few minutes, and it will be much easier to return to the work with a clear head afterwards.



# STRESS vs SUCCESS



## Coping with Stress

School is a **balancing act** - Exams and projects, classes and homework, study and your personal life all need to be taken care of and managed properly. No wonder some of us feel stressed! But

how can you tell when you are stressed? Negative emotions and worries about day to day responsibilities may all be symptoms of stress. We've all experienced nights tossing and turning

in bed, unable to get to sleep because our minds are worried about studies or other problems. As you try to cope with the demands of the Leaving Cert, stress can affect you in different ways.

## Exam Techniques

When you get your exam paper:

1. **Don't rush into writing.** Take your time to select your questions carefully.
2. **Read all questions and instructions a number of times.** Then you can decide which questions you can handle best. **Make sure you know what is being asked.**
3. **Underline the key words** in the question. Use **these keywords while answering** to help stick to the question being asked. **Answer every part** of the question.
4. Answer / **start with the easiest** questions first, to control anxiety/ panic.
5. **Concentrate the greatest effort on the questions with the most marks.**
6. If the paper is not what you expected then there is a tendency to panic! **Never, ever panic. Take a few deep breaths** and tackle something you feel you can do.
7. **Map responses before answering** when possible.
8. **Brainstorm:** Remember **key headings/ words** and **develop out key points.**
9. **Use your rough work sheets** to the maximum. Remember to include them when you hand up your paper. Number the question relevant on your rough work sheet.
10. When you brainstorm and jot down a point, most likely more points will be remembered. **Organise these points** in the most relevant order and rearrange them to enable you to put the best answer possible together. Leave out unnecessary points.
11. **Reread your work quickly** while you write and afterwards. This will help eliminate repetition and errors.
12. The most important thing to remember is this: **After 2 years of studying the course, you will know a great deal more than you realise.**
13. Never panic. relax and give yourself time to allow the information to come!

## Time Management

Plan timing **for every subject!** **Do not go over time** on questions which you know a great deal about. You can only get maximum marks.

**Have a reliable clock** on your desk to keep a check on time.

**Never leave** an exam **early.** Use all the time available.

**Leave time at the end to check back** on your work.

**If you run out of time** on a particular question, just **jot down points in bullet form** instead of answering the question in essay form.

**Do not do a post mortem after your exam!** You can not change it, so leave it go! Move on and look forward.

Success is best when we have tried our best. So, do that and all else will follow.

## Exam tips

You work hard over a two year syllabus and you get one opportunity on the day to prove yourself. Whether this is fair or not is irrelevant. What we can say with certainty is that if you've prepared and know what to expect you'll have a much greater chance of success! Exam techniques are no different. All it takes is a common sense approach on most things to maximise your potential!

### Practising:

**Practise** doing **what you will be asked to do in your exams.** **Concentrate on the types of questions** that you'll be asked on the days before exams.

**Study the marking schemes** in detail. Highlight which questions carry the most marks. Study the previous marking schemes on **examinations.ie**. Know how you will be marked! **Knowing how to avoid losing marks is the best skill you could have!**

### The night before:

**Avoid cramming** the night before your exam. Instead, **use your time to review the notes you made** throughout the year.

**Revise key areas/ topics** you know are important.

Make sure **you have all your necessary equipment** before the day of the exam. You don't need unnecessary stress at this stage!

**Get a good night's sleep!**

# StudySkills

Survival Kit





# 1. GOALS

People who set goals achieve a lot more than people who don't! With 3 or so months until your exams, **re-evaluating and re-stating goals** will give you direction and a clear focus. They enable you to monitor your progress and if necessary, change your approach. Try applying the following formula to your goal setting in the run-in to the exams:

Try use this checklist every time you set goals:

Create an action plan. What will you study? When?	
Write down simple tasks - break everything down	
Set a target date for each task to be completed.	
Set a small list of goals initially and increase the number of goals gradually as you get used to self-management.	
Decide how you will achieve each goal. Be realistic.	

Differentiate between short, medium and long term goals:

<b>SHORT TERM</b> Anything from one hour to a day or two	<b>MEDIUM TERM</b> Anything from a week up to a month	<b>LONG TERM</b> 2-3 months - Goals due come exam time
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## SMART GOALS

Specific  
Measurable  
Achievable  
Realistic  
Time frame

- Review your goals regularly and measure/ assess your progress.
- Make changes if needed but be honest with yourself.
- Write down your goals in your designated study area. Seeing them on paper will improve your chances of completing them!

# 2. TIME MANAGEMENT

Until the exams begin every student has the same **24 hours** in each day and 168 hours in each week. That is the most important thing to keep in mind. The key now is to **maximise** the effectiveness of the time spent studying.

**Do you have practical exams or projects due in any subjects?** Regardless of in what subject, you should have the date marked in your diary and a preparation plan to match.

DAILY PLAN	WEEKLY PLAN	MONTHLY PLAN
A day by day account of what you're studying. Prepare your study plan for the next day the night before.	Gives an overall view of study/tasks to be achieved for each subject in the week. IE. Complete a review of the play King Lear.	Holds records of approaching tests and examinations such as the Oral exams. Used to make sure nothing is left undone by exam time.
Try using 50 minute study periods with 10 minutes break in between.	The weekly plan is best prepared before the week begins. IE. on a Sunday	Does not go into much detail but gives an overall picture of your study.

- For a full list of project/exam dates go to **examinations.ie**.
- Consider at what time you are at your best. Then plan to study at this time ... you'll be most productive and have the most effective time management.
- **Aim for 2.5-3 hours study a day. Don't count the hours spent, count the work done!**

# 3. ORGANISATION

Good **organisational skills** are a huge boost in the months before your exams. Along with **goals** and **time management**, they provide the foundation for you to ace your study. Preparing for exams without **even one** of these three is like starting a journey without planning a route first. How can you end up where you want to go? So, here are four simple steps to get you organised:

1. WORK ZONE	2. NOTE SUMMARIES	3. DIVIDE INTO PARTS	4. FREQUENT REVISION
Set up an area as your work space. This will be where you do study/homework. Allow no disturbances. Remove distractions such as TV/Radio, etc. Only study here, take breaks somewhere else. Associating this place with study means that you will very quickly slip into study mode when you come here. Make sure it is well lit with space for writing.	Any notes made from now on should be good quality and kept until the exams are over. A good technique is to use one A4 page to summarise one topic. EG. An historical period Use study techniques from Step 5 to help with this. Keep subject notes together. Use colours/ highlighters to make them memorable.	At this stage, the best way to tackle large projects is piece by piece. Whether you have to read all the poetry again or prepare your Geography fieldwork, try making a list of the steps needed to complete the project. Look at your calendar and set smaller due dates to help guide your progress. Reflect on progress in daily, weekly and monthly plans.	Key to Success! Review your notes regularly until the exam. Here's a sample schedule to use: 1 <sup>st</sup> review (same day) 2 <sup>nd</sup> review (later in the week) 3 <sup>rd</sup> review (1 week later) 4 <sup>th</sup> review (2-3 weeks) 5 <sup>th</sup> review (every month until exams) <b>This approach has been scientifically proven to work!</b>

# 4. CLASSROOM CONTACT

Your teachers and your class time are your greatest assets in these few months. Don't be afraid to ask them to explain anything that is unclear. Include these questions/answers in your notebook. Your teachers aren't mind readers so you have to make your own class experience.

Learn in Class	Your Seat in The Classroom	Take Notes
Be a good listener. Pay attention and think about what you hear. Be ready and come to class with all the necessary books. Have your homework done. Review your notes from previous classes. Read ahead if you know what's being covered. If you have a question - ask it! Come to class with a positive attitude - be willing to learn.	Where you sit in class is vital for your concentration and with the right seat you can improve it greatly. Avoid the back of the room. Don't sit beside the window - you'll get distracted. This is where most of your time is spent, with the experts in that subject. Don't waste that opportunity,	Jot down key notes and don't wait to be told. Focus on what the teacher is saying. Try not to daydream. Become an active learner and pay attention even when you don't like the topic being discussed. You can think more quickly than your teacher can speak. Use this to your advantage. Work through your class. Repeat points you hear.

# 5. MEMORY TECHNIQUES

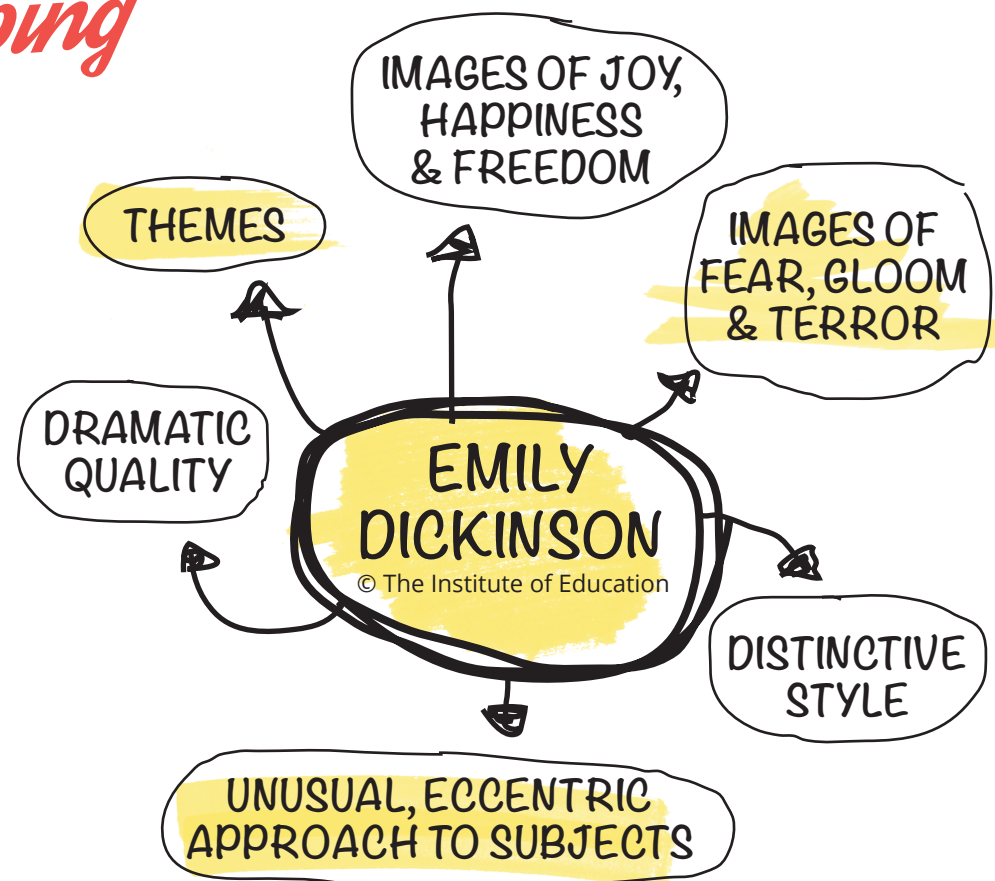
Setting goals and being organised are the building blocks to successful study. But here are some techniques you can use to supplement your preparation, and help with your study!

## Idea Mapping

### IDEA MAPPING

-the use of diagrams to represent facts, words or other ideas linked to a central concept around which they are arranged in a circular pattern.

- FAST BUT EFFECTIVE ☒
- CENTRALISED CONCEPT ☒
- EASY TO EXPAND UPON IN THE EXAM ☒
- VISUAL OVERVIEW OF WORK ☒
- COLOUR-CODED FOR EASIER RECALL ☒
- MIMICS THE LAYOUT OF YOUR MEMORY ☒



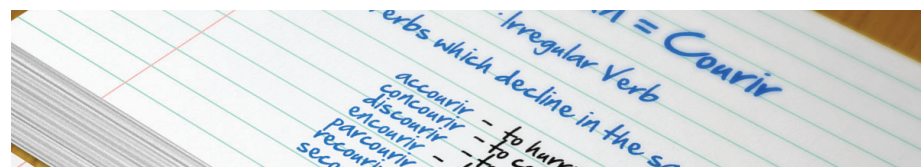
## Flash Cards

Flashcards are the cornerstone of many study strategies. One card works as a complete piece of information or trivia, containing both the question and the answer.

Using flashcards to learn items of information and subsequently test yourself on these facts has several advantages over simply reading the information from the books or notes.

The method of testing is reversible. EG instead of English to French, you can try testing on French to English translations.

Compared with reading from the textbook, it's harder to fool yourself into thinking you know the material when the answer is hidden on the other side of the card.



### FLASHCARD TIPS

- Choose the important facts from the chapter you need
- Use your own words/ key points from chapter
- Label cards with the subject heading and date. You can put them into various groupings for testing and quizzes
- Use flashcards in different colours
- Illustrate diagrams
- Don't put too much information on them

# 6. EXAM TECHNIQUES

You've worked hard and exam day is your opportunity to prove it. Why spend so long studying and no time on improving your exam technique? A few simple steps will help you deal with exam preparation, the night before and the day of the exam as well as exam timing and content.

## EXAM PREPARATION

- Don't practise a topic until you know it well enough.
- Make sure to practice under exam conditions. No textbook and no going over your time limit.
- Practice what you will be asked in exams.
- Concentrate on improving your understanding of what each question requires.
- Past exam papers and marking schemes are available online at [examinations.ie](http://examinations.ie). Study them in detail.
- Highlight which questions carry the most marks.
- Knowing how to avoid losing marks is the best skill any student could have.
- Become the examiner and think like them. Make sure you're giving them exactly what they are looking for.



## THE NIGHT BEFORE

- Try not to cram the night before an exam.
- Use the night before to review the notes you made throughout the year.
- Revise key areas/ topics you know are very important.
- Have all your necessary equipment (pens, calculator etc.) before the day of the exam.
- The morning of the exam should be stress free. Being organised is essential.
- Get someone else to set an alarm clock the night before as well.
- A good breakfast is a must (preferably a protein one rather than carbohydrate so you don't get sluggish during the exam).
- Arrive early to the exam.
- Take water, chewing gum and barley sugar to sustain you during the exam. The chewing gum can also help to relieve stress and nerves.
- Read through summaries briefly but don't discuss with others.
- Breathe deep and relax.

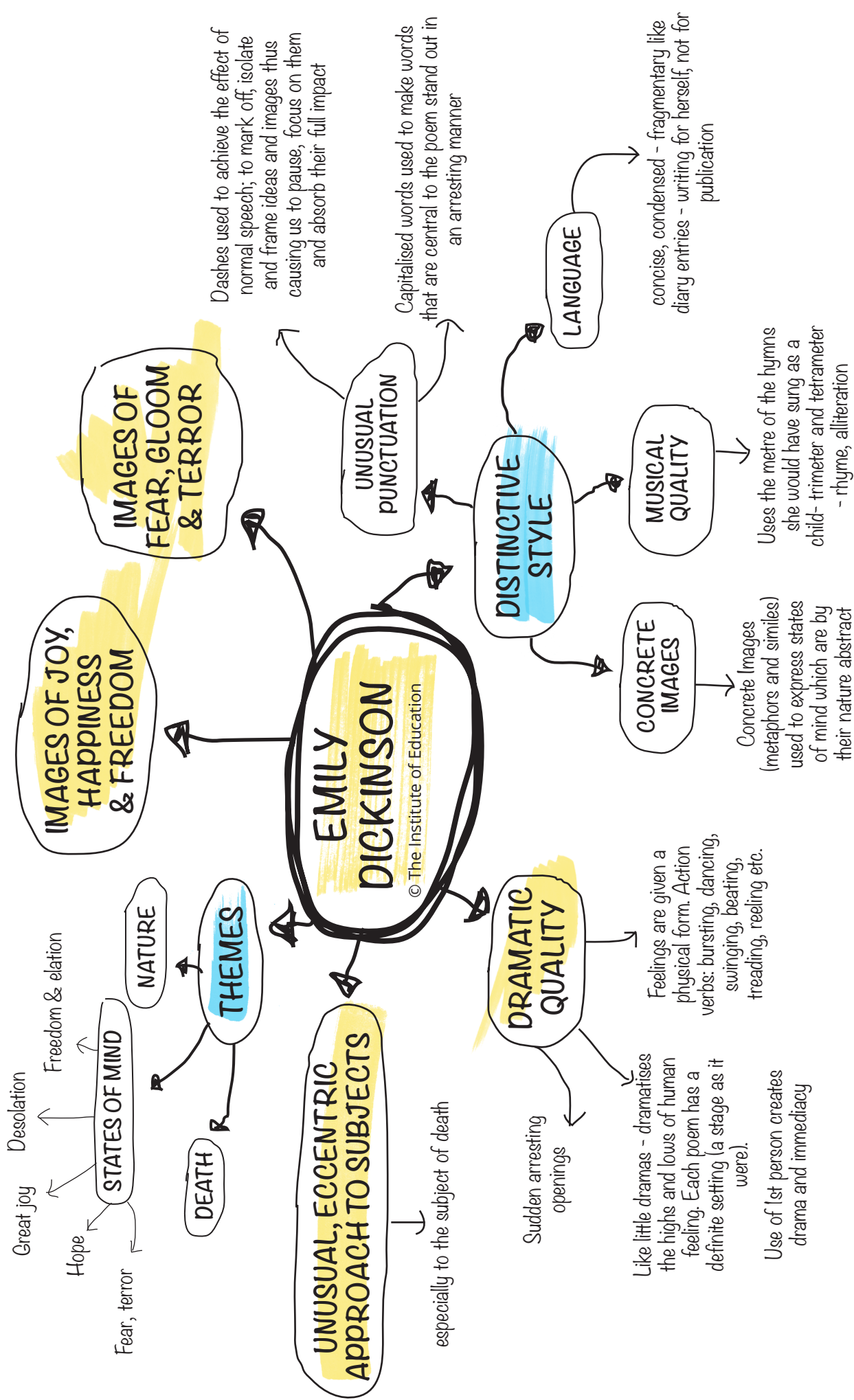


## EXAM TIMING

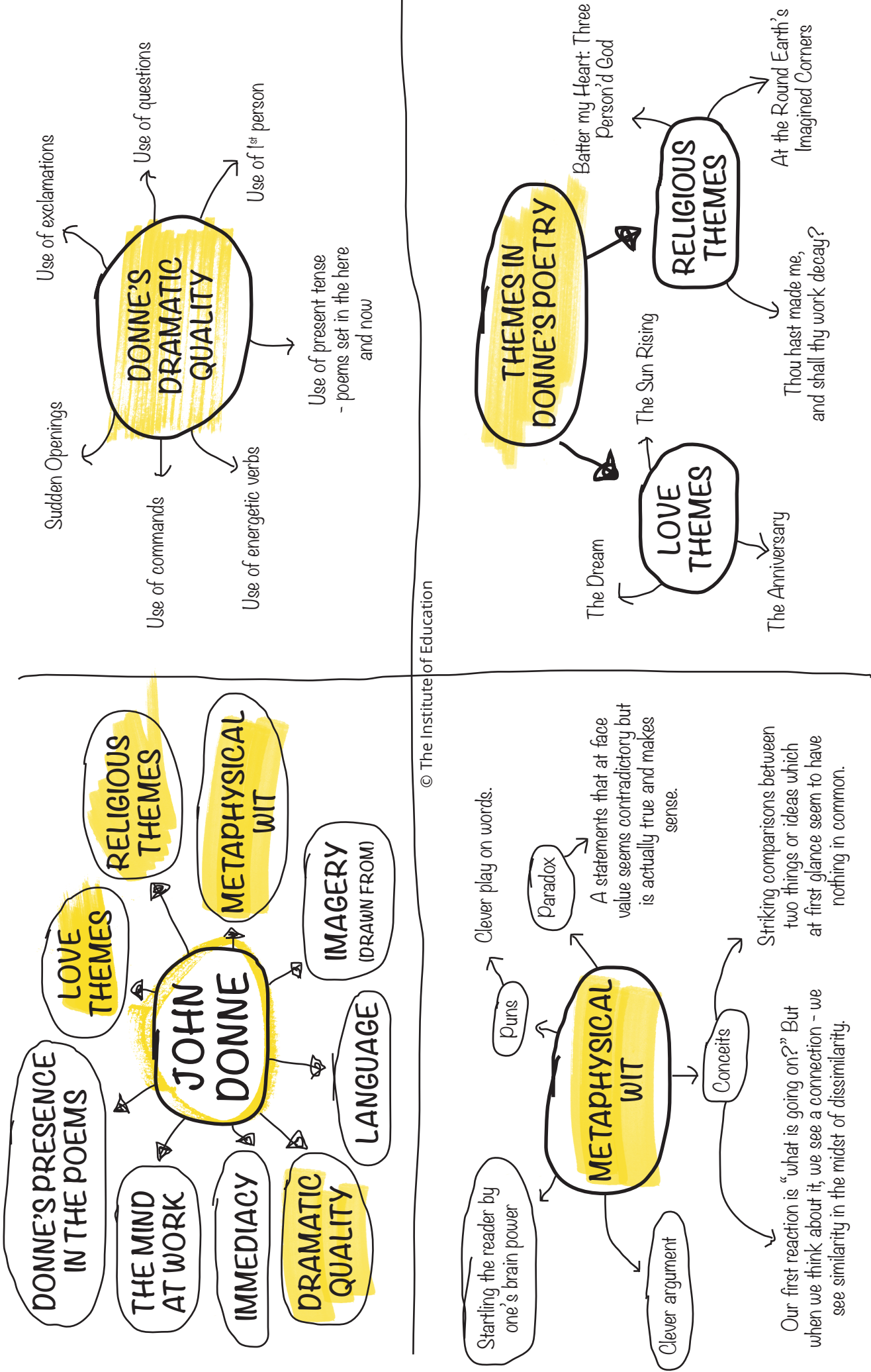
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- Underline the key words in the question. Use the keywords when answering to help stick to the question asked.
- Start with the easiest questions first to control anxiety/panic.
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- If the paper is not what you expect then there is a tendency to panic. Never, never panic. Take a few deep breaths and tackle something you feel you can do.
- Map, when possible, responses before answering. Brainstorm to remember key headings and develop key points.
- Use your rough work sheets to the maximum. Remember to include them when you hand up your paper.
- Reread your work quickly while you write and afterwards.



SAMPLE IDEA MAP (EXTENDED): EMILY DICKINSON



SAMPLE IDEA MAPS: JOHN DONNE'S POETRY





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